

IT IS CLAIMED:

1. A method for effecting electronic commerce via a data network, the data network including a server system configured to host a web site associated with a first content provider, the data network further including a client system configured or  
5 designed to implement a browser application, the browser application being configured or designed to facilitate access to the web site by a first user, the method comprising:

providing a single graphical spatial environment for simultaneous display of multiple catalog hierarchies;

the display of multiple catalog hierarchies including a plurality of different  
10 products corresponding to a plurality of different product categories;

wherein the plurality of different products are spatially arranged in manner so as to promote cross-selling of the plurality of different products.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the single graphical spatial environment  
15 corresponds to a two-dimensional representation of a floor space of a virtual store.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the multiple catalog hierarchies are displayed as a network of continuous images;

wherein the multiple catalog hierarchies include a first department, a first set of  
20 categories associated with the first department, and a first plurality of different products associated with each first set of categories; and

wherein the multiple catalog hierarchies further include a second department, a second set of categories associated with the second department, and a second plurality of different products associated with each second set of categories.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the cross-selling of the plurality of  
25 different products includes many-to-many cross-selling of the plurality of different products, wherein the spatial arrangement of each of the displayed products is used to promote sales of adjacent displayed products.

5. The method of claim 4 wherein the spatial arrangement of a first set of displayed products associated with a first catalog type is used to promote sales of a second set of displayed products associated with a second catalog type.

5 6. The method of claim 5 wherein the spatial arrangement of the second set of displayed products associated with the second catalog type is used to promote sales of a third set of displayed products associated with a third catalog type.

7. The method of claim 1 further comprising displaying a proxy image  
10 representing the first user within the spatial environment.

8. The method of claim 1 further comprising displaying to the first user proxy images representing the other on-line shoppers within the spatial environment.

15 9. A computer program product, the computer program product including a computer usable medium having computer readable code embodied therein, the computer readable code comprising computer code for implementing the method of claim 1.

20 10. A method for effecting electronic commerce via a data network, the data network including a server system configured to host a web site associated with a first content provider, the data network further including a client system configured or designed to implement a browser application, the browser application being configured or designed to facilitate access to the web site by a first user, the method comprising:

25 monitoring, in real-time, the first user's shopping activity as the user navigates through the web site; and

using the first user's shopping activity information to take appropriate action, in real-time, to help facilitate a sale to the first user.

30 11. The method of claim 10 further comprising tracking, in real-time, a relative position of the first user's current location within the web site.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein the relative position of the first user's current location is tracked using a two-dimensional coordinate system.

13. The method of claim 11 further comprising tracking a browsing path of the first user during an on-line shopping session.

14. The method of claim 13 further comprising logging contextual information which is displayed to the first user while the first user navigates the browsing path.

15. The method of claim 11 further comprising monitoring, a length of time the first user remains at a particular location within the web site.

16. A computer program product, the computer program product including a computer usable medium having computer readable code embodied therein, the computer readable code comprising computer code for implementing the method of claim 10.

17. A method for effecting electronic commerce via a data network, the data network including a server system configured to host a web site associated with a first content provider, the data network further including a client system configured or designed to implement a browser application, the browser application being configured or designed to facilitate access to the web site by a first user, the method comprising:

determining, in real-time, contextual information from the web site which is currently being displayed to the first user; and  
using the determined contextual information, in real-time, to take appropriate action to help facilitate a sale to the first user.

18. The method of claim 17 further comprising:  
tracking, in real-time, a relative position of the first user's current location within the web site; and

determining, using the relative position of the first user's current location, the contextual information from the web site which is currently being displayed to the first user.

5           19.     The method of claim 17 further comprising logging information relating to specific products from the web site which were actually displayed on the client system.

20.     The method of claim 17 further comprising tracking, in real-time,  
10     content from the web site which is currently being displayed to the first user.

21.     The method of claim 17 further comprising:  
          detecting, in real-time, at least one area of the web site which is relatively congested with customer activity; and  
15           responding to the detection of a relatively congested area of customer activity in order to facilitate sales of merchandise.

22.     The method of claim 21 wherein the response includes automatically dispatching at least one automated sales agent to assist at least one on-line customer  
20     currently shopping within the relatively congested area.

23.     The method of claim 21 wherein the response includes dispatching at least one customer service agent to assist at least one on-line customer currently shopping within the relatively congested area.

25           24.     The method of claim 17 further comprising:  
          determining that the first user has been browsing within the web site more than a predetermined amount of time; and  
          responding to a determination that the first user has been browsing within the  
30     web site more than a predetermined amount of time by taking appropriate action to help facilitate the first user making a purchase.

25. The method of claim 24 wherein the appropriate action includes providing sales assistance to the first user.

26. The method of claim 24 wherein the appropriate action includes offering  
5 to the first user a discount on. at least one product displayed within web site.

27. The method of claim 17 further comprising:  
determining that the first user has spent more than a predetermined amount of  
time within a first portion of the web site; and  
10 responding to a determination that the first user has spent more than a  
predetermined amount of time within a given portion of the web site by taking  
appropriate action to help facilitate the first user making a purchase.

28. The method of claim 27 wherein the appropriate action includes  
15 providing sales assistance to the first user.

29. The method of claim 27 wherein the appropriate action includes offering  
to the first user a discount on. at least one product displayed within the first portion of  
the web site.

30. A computer program product, the computer program product including a  
computer usable medium having computer readable code embodied therein, the  
computer readable code comprising computer code for implementing the method of  
claim 17.

31. A system for effecting electronic commerce via a data network, the data  
network including a client system configured or designed to implement a browser  
application, the browser application being configured or designed to facilitate access to  
web sites by a first user, the system comprising:

30 at least one processor;

at least one interface configured or designed to provide a communication link to  
at least one other network device in the data network; and

memory;

the system being configured or designed to host a web site associated with a first content provider,

the system being further configured or designed to determine, in real-time, contextual information from the web site which is currently being displayed to the first user;

the system being further configured or designed to use, in real-time, the determined contextual information, to take appropriate action to help facilitate a sale to the first user.

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32. The system of claim 31 wherein the system is further configured or designed to track, in real-time, a relative position of the first user's current location within the web site; and

wherein the system is further configured or designed to determine, using the relative position of the first user's current location, the contextual information from the web site which is currently being displayed to the first user.

33. The system of claim 31 wherein the system is further configured or designed to log information relating to specific products from the web site which were displayed on the client system.

34. The system of claim 31 wherein the system is further configured or designed to track, in real-time, content from the web site which is currently being displayed to the first user.

35. The system of claim 31 wherein the system is further configured or designed to detect, in real-time, at least one area of the web site which is relatively congested with customer activity; and

wherein the system is further configured or designed to respond to the detection of a relatively congested area of customer activity in order to facilitate sales of merchandise.

36. The system of claim 35 wherein the response includes automatically dispatching at least one automated sales agent to assist at least one on-line customer currently shopping within the relatively congested area.

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37. The system of claim 35 wherein the response includes dispatching at least one customer service agent to assist at least one on-line customer currently shopping within the relatively congested area.

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38. The system of claim 31 wherein the system is further configured or designed to determine that the first user has been browsing within the web site more than a predetermined amount of time; and

wherein the system is further configured or designed to respond to a determination that the first user has been browsing within the web site more than a predetermined amount of time by taking appropriate action to help facilitate the first user making a purchase.

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39. The system of claim 38 wherein the appropriate action includes providing sales assistance to the first user.

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40. The system of claim 38 wherein the appropriate action includes offering to the first user a discount on at least one product displayed within web site.

41. The system of claim 31 wherein the system is further configured or designed to determine that the first user has spent more than a predetermined amount of time within a first portion of the web site; and

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wherein the system is further configured or designed to respond to a determination that the first user has spent more than a predetermined amount of time within a given portion of the web site by taking appropriate action to help facilitate the first user making a purchase.

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42. The system of claim 41 wherein the appropriate action includes providing sales assistance to the first user.

43. The system of claim 41 wherein the appropriate action includes offering  
5 to the first user a discount on. at least one product displayed within the first portion of the web site.

44. A system for effecting electronic commerce via a data network, the data network including a client system configured or designed to implement a browser  
10 application, the browser application being configured or designed to facilitate access to web sites by a first user, the system comprising:

at least one processor;

at least one interface configured or designed to provide a communication link to  
at least one other network device in the data network; and

15 memory;

the system being configured or designed to host a web site associated with a first content provider,

the system being further configured or designed to provide a single graphical spatial environment for simultaneous display of multiple catalog hierarchies;

20 the display of multiple catalog hierarchies including a plurality of different products corresponding to a plurality of different product categories;

wherein the plurality of different products are spatially arranged in manner so as to promote cross-selling of the plurality of different products.

25 45. The system of claim 44 wherein the single graphical spatial environment corresponds to a two-dimensional representation of a floor space of a virtual store.

46. The system of claim 44 wherein the multiple catalog hierarchies are displayed as a network of continuous images;

30 wherein the multiple catalog hierarchies include a first department, a first set of categories associated with the first department, and a first plurality of different products associated with each first set of categories; and



wherein the multiple catalog hierarchies further include a second department, a second set of categories associated with the second department, and a second plurality of different products associated with each second set of categories.

5           47.    The system of claim 44 wherein the system is further configured or designed to many-to-many cross-selling of the plurality of different products, wherein the spatial arrangement of each of the displayed products is used to promote sales of adjacent displayed products.

10           48.    The system of claim 47 wherein the spatial arrangement of a first set of displayed products associated with a first catalog type is used to promote sales of a second set of displayed products associated with a second catalog type.

15           49.    The system of claim 48 wherein the spatial arrangement of the second set of displayed products associated with the second catalog type is used to promote sales of a third set of displayed products associated with a third catalog type.

20           50.    The system of claim 44 wherein the system is further configured or designed to display a proxy image representing the first user within the spatial environment.

25           51.    The system of claim 44 wherein the system is further configured or designed to display to the first user proxy images representing the other on-line shoppers within the spatial environment.

30           52.    A system for effecting electronic commerce via a data network, the data network including a server system configured to host a web site associated with a first content provider, the data network further including a client system configured or designed to implement a browser application, the browser application being configured or designed to facilitate access to the web site by a first user, the system comprising:

means for determining, in real-time, contextual information from the web site which is currently being displayed to the first user;

means for tracking, in real-time, a relative position of the first user's current location within the web site; and

means for determining, using the relative position of the first user's current location, the contextual information from the web site which is currently being  
5 displayed to the first user.